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There are several dimensions to this sexting phenomenon and we understand that the legislature has an enormous task ahead of them in trying to address all of these dimensions. The fact that these photos can end up in the wrong hands is a concern. Although parents believe they know what their teenagers are doing, there is research that shows they do not. The scholarly journal Child Development reported the lack of parent and child congruency regarding adolescent sexual behaviors. According to research, there are reports suggesting that parents underestimate the sexual activities of their teens. Specifically, 47% of mothers incorrectly thought that their teen had not engaged in sexual intercourse. Parents who engage in more extensive conversations with their children about sex are more likely to be aware of their child's sexual activity. However, the better the overall relationship between parent and teen, the less likely it would be that the parent would accurately perceive their child's sexual activity because the child does not want to hurt or upset the parent. (Jaccard, 1998).

Although parents may not be aware of their teen's sexual behavior and sending of photos, we know from research that photographs can end up in the hands of anyone. What we should be careful of is if these photos end up in the hands of a sex offender.

If these "sexts" or explicit photographs end up in the hands of a pedophile or sex offender, there can be major consequences and may lead to a re-offense. According to the scholarly journal Deviant Behavior, there is evidence to strongly suggest that for some potential offenders pornography may activate a predisposition to offend. Unlike the general public, sex offenders become more aroused and aggressive than others by such materials, thereby contributing to offending. These photos can be sent where-ever and whenever and people should be aware that sex offenders become motivated when 'fueled just before the offense'. (Mustaine, 2009)

According to a review of the book Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations, pedophiles swap pornographic photographs the way boys swap baseball cards; as they add to their collections, they get strong reinforcement from each other for their behavior. Pedophiles get active validation from other pedophiles. (Marshall, 1989)

Although this may be an extreme case of pornographic stimulation, it should be noted that a report of the Attorney General's office in the state of Texas reported that Arthur Gary Bishop, convicted for sexually abusing and killing five young boys said, 'If pornographic material would have been unavailable to me... It is most probable that my sexual activities would not have escalated to the degree they did.' He said pornography's impact on him was 'devastating' he states that he is a homosexual pedophile convicted of murder, and pornography was a determining factor to his downfall. (Anderson, 2010)

References

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